

One of my favorite stories—and I believe Senator NELSON shared this the other night—is this one that I wanted to close with. He and I ran into this at Ave Maria Catholic University, which is literally out in the Everglades, between Naples and Miami. We went out there to visit, and we were told extraordinary stories of some of their students.

On the night before the storm, there were about 300 migrants from nearby communities—many of whom are probably undocumented, in the country illegally—who didn't want to evacuate. They were afraid of being deported. Ultimately, they saw that the storm was bad. They showed up at Ave Maria. Ave Maria opened its doors and welcomed them into the gym. There were students who stayed behind and played with the kids, entertained the kids throughout the storm, and took care of them.

What was really uplifting was the story of two nursing students. Right before the storm hit, right before you could no longer go out, the sheriff's office shows up at Ave Maria with eight seniors from a nearby ALF. The staff at the ALF quit. They literally left. They didn't show up. They abandoned them. The sheriff's office brings them, and these two nursing students bring the eight seniors into their dorms. They brought them into the women's dorm and cared for them for two days, triaging the medicine they needed to take, understanding how to do this, that, and the other. These are amazing stories about these young people. If there is any doubt about the future of America, think about the extraordinary work these young people put in. Nobody told them to do it. They could have left. They could have gone back to wherever they were from, but they stayed and took care of them.

We have a long way to go, but we want to thank all the people for the great wishes we got from all of my colleagues and from people around the country. This is a storm that impacts Florida in ways we are going to feel for a long time.

Let me close by asking all of you to take a moment tonight, if you can and you wish, to pray for the island of Puerto Rico, a U.S. Territory, where millions of our fellow Americans are staring down the barrel of the most powerful storm that ever has perhaps hit that island, and this after already getting hit by Irma just a week ago. It has the potential to be an extraordinary catastrophe. We pray that is not the case. I hope we stand ready to assist our fellow Americans on the island of Puerto Rico. Let's pray for them tonight because tomorrow morning is going to be a very difficult time for them as this extraordinary hurricane, Hurricane Maria, is about to slam right into them.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT AARON BUTLER

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, it is with great reverence that I rise today to pay tribute to one of Utah's great soldiers, SSG Aaron Butler, who was tragically killed on August 16, 2017, by an improvised explosive device in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. On that fateful day, Butler was searching for Islamic State loyalists in a booby-trapped building and was caught in an explosion that took his life and injured 11 of his comrades.

Staff Sergeant Butler was a member of the Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group of the Utah National Guard. Butler's desire to serve in our Nation's military started at a young age when, as a first-grader, he told his family he would grow up to be a soldier. His actual military service began in high school when he enlisted in the Utah National Guard. Staff Sergeant Butler continued to look for opportunities to make a difference, and a few years later, he began the very difficult Special Forces training. He graduated from this program with honors on January 14, 2016. He deemed it a tremendous honor to don the Green Beret.

Butler has been described as a natural leader, an accomplished athlete, and an adventurous soul. As a young man, he excelled in football and wrestling. In fact, through talent and sheer determination, Butler became a four-time State wrestling champion, only the 17th wrestler in Utah history to accomplish such a feat. He loved the outdoors and embraced the scouting program, earning the rank of Eagle Scout.

Butler loved to serve his fellow men and women and did it in variety of ways including, as a full-time missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission in Africa. During this time, he spent months improving the infrastructure and daily lives of those living there. He also brought a message of peace and testified of the love our Savior, Jesus Christ, has for all his children.

I have been deeply touched by the many tributes and words of honor offered on behalf of this courageous soldier since this tragedy occurred. He was a truly remarkable young man and a seasoned soldier who possessed an unwavering commitment to what is right and good.

Butler also had a great love for our Nation's military. His Special Forces teammates described him as a "warrior," an "incredible man, teammate, and friend," and someone who "fought

with everything he had to the very end," but perhaps the greatest tribute paid to this brave soldier was simply stated by his brother, Shane Butler, who said, "[Aaron] showed us how to live."

Butler leaves behind his loving parents, Randy and Laura Butler of Monticello, UT; six brothers and one sister; his fiancée, Alexandra Seagrove, and many neighbors, fellow soldiers, and friends.

The men and women of our Nation's military are my heroes. I honor them for their courage, their service, and their sacrifice. I am deeply humbled by this young man's life and his willingness to pay the ultimate sacrifice. May God bless the friends and family of Staff Sergeant Butler with peace and comfort at this difficult time. I am certain Aaron's life will have a lasting impact on his family, his community, and the country he loved.

REMEMBERING FRAN JARRELL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to remember the life of Fran Jarrell, of Paintsville, KY, who passed away on August 27, 2017, at the age of 72.

For many years, Fran was a driving force in her community. She served on numerous public committees and boards, supporting the efforts of organizations from the mentoring committee for Community of Hope to the Paintsville Garden Club. She also was a member of the Paintsville City Council for many years, dedicating herself to making the community a better place to live and work. Most recently, Fran was the executive director of the Paintsville/Johnson County Chamber of Commerce, where she was committed to bringing economic development and opportunity to the area. In her numerous roles, Fran worked to bring out the beauty and possibilities of her city.

The Paintsville community mourned Fran's passing. Flowers decorated the entire downtown area as a tribute to her life, her passion, and her dedication to others. Elaine and I send our condolences to Fran's children, sisters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

PROTECTING CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about a provision that was included for the first time by myself and Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM in the fiscal year 2018 Department of State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill, which was reported unanimously by the Senate Appropriations Committee on September 7.

Specifically, the committee-reported bill includes \$15 million to implement a U.S. interagency strategy, led by the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, to

support and protect civil society activists, including human rights and environmental defenders and independent journalists, in countries where such activists have been threatened or killed for peacefully exercising their rights of free expression, association, and assembly.

Nearly 1,000 violations were reported against human rights defenders in 2016, including killings, detentions, judicial prosecutions, physical attacks, and other threats and harassments. Civil society activists are targeted by both state and nonstate actors, including private companies and investors, seeking to obstruct the rights of voters, minorities, landowners, environmentalists, indigenous peoples, and refugees, among other vulnerable groups. These attacks are not limited to a particular region or a handful of countries—they are common in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East—nor are they limited to countries with authoritarian governments, such as Cambodia, Rwanda, Eritrea, Egypt, and Russia. Democratically elected governments are also culpable, such as Honduras, Philippines, Kenya, Ecuador, and Turkey. Ultimately, democracy cannot survive if the rights of civil society and the independent media are not protected.

Last year was the deadliest year on record for land and environmental defenders. There were more deaths reported in more countries than ever before. Competition for land and natural resources has intensified to an alltime high, with companies around the globe putting greater emphasis on profit margins than on environmental protection or land ownership rights. As these pressures increase, the risk to civil society activists will also increase.

Similarly, although the number of journalists killed on assignment dropped slightly in 2016, the number of journalists in prison reached its highest level yet. More than 250 journalists are imprisoned worldwide because of their work. This is an egregious violation of the universal right of free expression.

These statistics are almost certainly underestimates, given the suppressions of free speech and lack of transparent and effective judicial systems in many countries where civil society activists face the most severe threats to their work and lives.

It is important for all of us to be aware of the growing threats to civil society activists worldwide, as well as the relevant funding and language included in the committee-reported Department of State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill. This should be the first step in developing an inter-agency strategy to focus attention and resources on this critical problem.

I ask unanimous consent that the language in the committee report describing this provision be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SEC. 7032. DEMOCRACY PROGRAMS.

Protection of Civil Society Activists.—For purposes of developing the strategy and allocating funds under subsection (j), the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor shall consult with the Committee and with representatives of civil society and independent media organizations whose members have been threatened or killed. The uses of funds shall include strengthening the capacity of such organizations, protecting their members who have been threatened, supporting the enactment of laws to protect freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, and educating the public about the legitimate role of such activists and journalists in society.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO APPREHEND AND PROSECUTE WAR CRIMINALS

Mr. LEAHY Mr. President, I want to speak very briefly about an amendment that was adopted unanimously by the Appropriations Committee 2 weeks ago, during markup of the fiscal year 2018 Department of State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill.

The amendment, which I offered, was identical to one that was adopted by the committee last year and the year before that.

It would permit the United States to provide technical assistance, training, assistance for victims, protection of witnesses, and law enforcement support related to investigations, apprehensions, and prosecutions of the world's most notorious war criminals.

It is important to note what my amendment does not do. For example, while I support the International Criminal Court which has proven to be a nonpolitical, adjudicative body comprised of reputable, experienced jurists who have carried out their responsibilities impartially and professionally, my amendment does not authorize a regular cash contribution to the International Criminal Court.

Also, my amendment exempts American servicemembers, members of NATO, and major non-NATO allies, such as Israel.

As the committee report indicates, the amendment is focused on the worst of the worst: Joseph Kony, the head of the Lord's Resistance Army, Sudan's President Bashir; Syria's President Assad; and other high-profile criminals.

The United States has some of the world's most experienced criminal investigators and prosecutors. We have unique capabilities. Even though we do not contribute funds to the ICC—and my amendment does not change that—we have strongly supported the court's efforts in the past—For example, when it prosecuted Serbian President Milosevic and when it tried and convicted Charles Taylor, the war criminal in Sierra Leone—and we will support the ICC if Joseph Kony and others like him are apprehended.

I think we all agree that we should do what we can to help bring the world's worst war criminals to justice. My amendment would do that, and I

hope other Senators will lend their voices in support of its inclusion in the final conference agreement.

I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my amendment be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

WAR CRIMES TRIBUNALS

Sec. 7047.

(b) None of the funds appropriated by this Act may be made available for a United States contribution to the International Criminal Court: *Provided*, That notwithstanding section 705(b) of the Admiral James W. Nance and Meg Donovan Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal years 2000 and 2001 (division A of Public Law 106-113) and consistent with section 2015 of the American Service-Members Protection Act, 2002, as amended, funds may be made available for technical assistance, training, assistance for victims, protection of witnesses, and law enforcement support related to international investigations, apprehensions, prosecutions, and adjudications of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. *Provided further*, That the previous proviso shall not apply to American service members and other United States citizens or nationals, or to nationals of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or major non-NATO allies initially designated pursuant to section 517(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

INTERNATIONAL HIV/AIDS PROGRAMS

Mr. LEAHY Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about the funding to combat HIV/AIDS in the fiscal year 2018 Department of State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill, which was reported unanimously by the Senate Appropriations Committee on September 7.

In May, the Congress received the President's fiscal year 2018 budget request, which included a \$1 billion cut to international HIV/AIDS programs. The White House proposed to focus the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief—the PEPFAR program—in 12 priority countries, while only maintaining current treatment levels in the other 24 countries in which PEPFAR works. This would mean no lifesaving drugs for new patients in any of those 24 countries and the end of initiatives PEPFAR has undertaken to accelerate progress in those countries.

Fortunately, the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee, chaired by Senator GRAHAM and of which I am ranking member, rejected the President's proposed cut and restored HIV/AIDS funding to the current level. The committee-reported bill includes a total of \$6 billion for HIV/AIDS programs, including \$4.32 billion for PEPFAR, \$1.35 billion for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and malaria, and \$330 million for HIV/AIDS programs administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The committee report accompanying the bill also reaffirms the key role PEPFAR plays in HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment around the